

PRISCILLA'S  
LOVE STORY  
BY ❧❧❧❧  
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PRESCOTT  
SPOFFORD



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## Priscilla's Love-Story



# Priscilla's Love-Story

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BY

Harriet Prescott Spofford

AUTHOR OF "A MASTER SPIRIT"  
"AN INHERITANCE"  
"A SCARLET POPPY"



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# Priscilla's Love-Story

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## I

THE sun fell through the row of many-paned windows in a broad beam over Priscilla's plants, and especially over a crab-cactus in full bloom, every rosy flower of which was like a live being, with the shower of long, yellow, dusty stamens that tumbled out of the backward-bent petals all alert and listening; and the room with its warm, flowery life seemed an oasis in the great snow desert of the hill country outside.

It was Priscilla herself as much as the flowers that gave this room its

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summery suggestion — the tall, fair creature, with nothing slight or frail about her, but moulded like a young goddess, with large, firm curves; with creamy skin, where the velvet cheek was only less carmine than the glorious cactus flower on the shelf above; with yellow hair, whose massive braids, half-escaped from the comb just now, had fallen on her neck; with the smile that did not quite break to dimples, but warmed the deep azure of the gold-fringed eyes till their glance was itself at once a smile and a caress.

But if that glance were a caress, it was all the caress she gave, except for the motion of that lifted hand on the long hanging spray of the cactus. With all her bounteousness of aspect a singular reserve was mingled, which if it filled Jerome Salter's heart with

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longing, filled him also with dismay. He was not quite ready to ask this beautiful girl to be his wife, but he was quite ready to prevent her being the wife of any one else—that great out-door fellow of a George Pastner, for instance, with the vast farm and game-preserves in the hills beyond. As for Jerome, he was yet in college, and his fate depended on an uncle who had other views for him, who was waiting to take him to Europe on his graduation, to show him the world and the ways of the world, to initiate him into something that Jerome called life—the pleasure-loving fellow that he was, only too ready for this gay future; a slender youth, with a certain dark beauty of his own, and who had perhaps attracted Priscilla by her necessity of pitying everything that

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seemed weak and needing to be made strong.

Not that Priscilla was aware of this; few people would have thought of pitying Jerome Salter. It was only that the truth in her nature was as illuminating as a sunbeam; and yet the pity from which love springs, and into which love resolves, was so all-unsuspected by her that she thought it was herself for whom she felt it. Indeed, when she glanced at Jerome, and caught the glow of his dreamy eye beneath the thick black lashes, saw the droop of the full lip beneath the triste mustache, saw the color mount and flash and fade on the tawny cheek, and heard that low voice whose every tone had an inner thrill like music, and felt her own heart flutter and sink and all her nerves grow tenser, she



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knew that it was she and not he who was to be pitied. Why had she ever let herself go in this way? Why had she not waited to be wooed before she was won? Why, why? And anger with herself reacted as if she were angry with him, and made her answer him briefly.

"Curt and to the point as a Greek chorus," said he, leaning his arm on the high shelf and overlooking her. Priscilla knew nothing about Greek choruses. "Are you troubled? Is anything the matter?" he demanded.

"Nothing."

"Nothing? You are not apt to let nothing bring you to naught. Are you ill?" he asked, when she did not smile.

"Do I look ill?" and she turned with her proud calm air.

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“No, by Jove! You look the incarnation of boundless health and beauty. Now what are you angry about?” as she turned again as quickly. “Is it—Priscilla—because—because I spoke of going away?” he urged, in a gentler tone.

“Because you spoke of going away?” she answered, slowly. “Really,” with half a shrug, “what is it to me whether you go or whether you stay?”

“Apparently not anything.”

“Oh, no. That is not kind,” said Priscilla. “I am very glad you should have the chance. I think it is very good of your uncle—for I do n’t believe he is quite satisfied with what you have done.”

“Now, Priscilla, how do you know he is not satisfied? Because you think so poorly of me yourself?”

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"I never said I thought poorly of you," faltered Priscilla, looking down.

"But you think, with the talents I have, I ought to be valedictorian instead of wasting my time writing love-songs and coming out nowhere."

"I never said so," said Priscilla again.

"No, not you, no! Some things go without saying. Well, it 's of no consequence. I never heard of a valedictorian in his class ever doing anything else; did you? If I get the degree anyway, the others may have all that comes with the *summa* and the *laude*. What shall I care about that when I am rocking among the Hebrides; when I am mooning in a gondola round the waterways of Venice; when I am simmering up the Nile, and finding life sweet in the shadow of old temples; when I am in Greece, all sea and sky, and

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the spirits of old heroes, old poets, old beauty? Oh, I say, Priscilla," walking up and down the room now with his hands in his pockets, "how flat it seems to talk of going through all that alone! What should I care for the miles of sea and foam round Fingal's Cave without you along; for the Lido, for Philæ, for blue Galilee? No, no; *prensus in Ægio* without you—it would be simply banishment and punishment! I would rather fag on here forever and go without Europe—"

"And your uncle's fortune?"

"Priscilla, I believe you love money more than I do."

Priscilla made a backward movement of her wrist that was half an accusation. It said for her, "How do you dare say a thing so false, when you know I am in this low room, with its

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braided mats, its homespun curtains, its sketches of my own pencil, its rude chairs and lounges, because I do not love money, because I have loved you better than money!"

"Oh, I know," responded Jerome. "What a tragedy queen you are, Priscilla! You ought to go on the stage. Lady Macbeth, that Scottish thane's wife, should have been blonde and sumptuous like you. Oh, I know you could leave this any day for George Pastner's lodge in the wilderness, the palace that it is! Great Scott! I do n't see why you do n't."

She looked at him a moment, startled out of her enforced calm; and then, in spite of herself, the tears swam, and made her blue eyes as tender and divine as twilight heaven, as she sank into the low chair at hand.

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And in another moment he was on his knees beside her, with his arms lifted about her, drawing her over towards him, kissing her passionately, bursting into a great sob of joy, and laying his head on her breast.

It was characteristic of Priscilla that at that moment she clasped her arms round him and held him, and bent her head over him, not like a sweetheart, but like a mother. And then he had lifted his face, with the tears on it still, was kissing her throat, her cheek, her lips.

“My God!” he said; “you are so beautiful.”

His words hurt Priscilla a little even in that throb of ecstasy. She took his face in her two hands and held it off a space. To her that was the most beautiful thing in heaven or on earth.

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But she would not have said it. Love was so far beyond beauty.

"I love you so," she said.

And then there came a sound overhead as of the pushing back of chairs and of restless feet going back and forth; and other feet, slower, heavier, that had something like the tread of a soldier, George Pastner's feet, came down the stairs, and the door opened and closed behind them.

"Oh!" cried Priscilla, drawing back, "I have done wrong!" And then her head fell forward on her lover's shoulder, and rested there.

How sweet to live thus forever! Just to rest and feel his presence, to be filled and surrounded with his love, to ask no more of fate! If this moment were but eternity! Then the steps overhead made themselves felt through

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all the sweetness of the dream, swift, eager steps, in narrow space—so some madman might walk to and fro the length of his chain, some creature in its cage. She lifted her head and her lover saw that she had grown very pale. “I do n’t know what to do!” she said. “I do n’t know what to do!”

If Jerome Salter felt at that instant that he also did not know what to do, now that she had confessed all he had longed for and implored, if even in the deliciousness of this the first time he had ever touched her lips or put his arms about her or won from her any expression of her love, he was aware that he had gone further than he had a right, than was best for him as yet, he had no time to echo her words, for the steps came bounding down the stairs, and there was only an instant in



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which to start to his feet and stand leaning against the shelf as before, when the door quickly opened, and there came in a person whom you might have taken for a child, a beautiful child; but who at another glance it was evident was a youth of twenty-one or two, whose face was as precise a counterpart of Priscilla's as delicate health and its nervous peevishness, a stronger intellect, a different sex, could allow; but whose body was the dwarfed and deformed shape of a boy of twelve. He was Priscilla's twin brother, Geoffrey, and there existed between them the tie that always gives twin children a part of either's life, and which was made closer from the fact that he had never been well from his birth, so that Priscilla felt that she had absorbed into her own abounding

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being all his portion of strength and vitality.

She had not attempted to move, as Jerome had done, but still sat slightly bent forward, a glow like the blush of a rose mounting and suffusing all her face; and as Geoffrey's eyes fell on it the scorn pictured in his rapid glance was such that one asked if all the sweetness of nature had been absorbed by Priscilla too, and left him only intellectual force — force thwarted and frustrated by his physical misfortune, and likely to become only bitterness of soul. He gave Jerome a short word, taking no notice of the cushions that the latter sprang to shake up in the arm-chair, but standing with his hand on the open door, as if awaiting the other's departure.

“This is quite contrary to our un-

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derstanding," he said, his head thrown back. And dwarfed and hunched as he was, he was quite the master of the situation.

"I suppose one may be allowed to tell good news and to say farewell to his friends and acquaintances — "

"Farewell!" exclaimed Priscilla.

Jerome laughed. His dark and splendid face was full of joy and triumph. "For to-day," he said, and bent and raised her fingers to his lips, and crossed the room and laid his hand on Geoffrey's shoulder, at first as if he would bend tenderly to a girl, and then as if he would wheel him round angrily, and thought better of it, and laughed gayly and was gone.

"I see it all," said Geoffrey then. "This is just once too often. Oh, if he was n't so enticing a scamp, so

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sweet a manner, so 'bad and mad and sad' a rogue! If I didn't love him more than you do yourself!"

"I?" murmured Priscilla, faintly.

"More than you think you do, let us say," said the dwarf, climbing and settling himself in the arm-chair, tall then among his cushions. "For if you really cared for Jerome Salter, Priscilla," he said, with a flash of the eyes that were a shade less blue than the sky-beams of Priscilla's, "you would never let him risk his future, the development of his talents, all his chances at fortune with his uncle's approval, on the rock of a premature love-affair, a penniless wife."

"Do you think, then," faltered Priscilla, "that success, gratified ambition, money in hand, are so much more worth than love—just love?"

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“*That* for love—just love!” said the little despot in the arm-chair, snapping his fingers. “Do you remember Romeo in love with Rosalind just before Juliet makes fate for him? Do you suppose Jerome Salter, going out in the world, will not be terribly hampered by a Rosalind that clings—”

“We have been all over this so often, Geoff,” she said, wearily.

“And shall have to go all over it as many times more, if the folly holds out.”

“Very well, then,” said Priscilla, gazing steadily at him. “I mean that it will hold out, if you call faithfulness folly. Jerome will no more change than I, and the sun will fall from heaven before I do.”

“Before you fall from heaven. Well put. Before you fall from a fool’s

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paradise. In the name of goodness what is this love, this infatuation? Why are you willing to leave me, your own other self, born with you, more than born with you, bred with you, a part of you, for this fellow whom you never saw till three years ago? Yes, yes — enchanting fellow — whole and hale, I know; not the broken, ruined, half-made-up thing I am. Yet still it seems to me—I flatter myself, doubtless—that I am something better worth.”

“Oh, Geoffrey darling, do n’t you see—it is n’t a question of worth—it—it’s something of nature—you cannot help it—it comes just as the sun comes up in the sky!”

“Why does n’t it come to me then? Oh, you need n’t speak! I will spare you the trouble of saying.”

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"Oh, Geoffrey!"

"There, there, Priscilla! I suppose no one was ever born with less tact than you have. I suppose it would be impossible for any one to make me feel my misfortune more frequently than you do—"

"Oh, what have I said, what have I done, Geoffrey?" turning towards him with outstretched hands. "You know, you must know, I never thought of it. You have n't any misfortune in my eyes. When I look at you you are perfectly beautiful—"

"I have n't any misfortune? It takes a man's sister to say that, who sees him crippled, shapeless—"

"Oh, Geoffrey!" exclaimed Priscilla, springing to her feet, "I believe you are driving me wild."

"I driving you wild?" But the

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door had closed, and Priscilla had escaped; and escaped, as Geoffrey meant she should, with a very decided diversion from the recent preoccupation of her mind.

Geoffrey waited a little while, and then he let himself down laboriously from his chair and went to the piano—Priscilla was the music-teacher of the little town suburban to the college town, giving lessons even to some few of the students, of whom Jerome had been one—and he began to play at first the broken chords of his own fancy, and then the wild measures of the Peer Gynt dances over and over, as if he rejoiced in the bitter mockery of the uncanny music, as if he danced there with his fellow gnomes and trolls; and at last the mad merriment of Chopin's Tarentella. Priscilla heard him where



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she lay sobbing in her little room, and listened, unable to reconcile her perplexed emotions, to untangle the coil of her pity for Geoffrey and her love for Jerome. Her thoughts had gone far away with her, and she started as if she had been asleep; and then she was aware of a softer note in the music, although it seemed to be filling the air and throbbing all about her.

Geoffrey was still playing, but what different strains; utterly sad, heart-broken, complaining minors of his own, the air of Schubert's "Wanderer," fragments of the *Tristan und Isolde* music—when Priscilla, with her tear-swollen eyes hidden by her veil, came down and went out to her scholars, leaving him to a sort of revel in sorrow, playing himself, indeed, into a mood of exceeding happiness with the

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all unutterable beauty of parts of the *Sonata appassionata*. She was coming home from her lessons, tired by one dull girl's heavy fingers and stolid brains, saddened with another's facility, feeling her breath come quickly, almost to suffocation, with the remembrance of her love and joy, with the vision of Jerome's face before her mind's eye, feeling a weight of terror settle on her as she drew nearer to Geoffrey and his anger and his sorrow and the ever-fresh and present need of her compassion. Life was so hard for Geoffrey, all experience so bitter. When he saw the college youths in their vigor of comeliness, himself crippled and set apart, his nature had bade fair to grow as warped with envy and indignation as his body was with deformity; and now, conscious of great

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powers paralyzed by poverty, and seeing Jerome win away from him the one thing in the world he had to love—what could be more bitter? “Oh, poor Geoffrey!” she cried out, sharply, as she went her way. “Poor Geoffrey!”

The brook was roaring along, black in its icy borders below her and beside her as she went; the sunset was paling with rich pomegranate hues over long fields of snow in the gap of the mountains; a star came trembling out there, and then a thin scarf of cloud blew over, and a young moon hung like the petal of a flower dropped from some mighty hand, and was gone in the great shadow below that held the coming storm. There was a soft crystalline darkness in the air, and no sound in the universe, it seemed, but that of the tinkle of the brook and the

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crisp snow under her feet, when she heard the galloping of a horse down the bridle-path. She knew it was Mr. Pastner's horse before his great black shadow fell upon the air as he stopped at her side and his rider threw himself off, and holding the bridle on his arm, went along with her. He looked, towering beside her, as large, as powerful, as the creature whose head was over his shoulder. His presence seemed the one thing she could not bear. "You must let me go with you," he said. "It is surely unsafe for you at this hour alone. And I have an errand with Geoffrey concerning the model—some nuts and bolts that he has found necessary."

"Oh, the model, yes." How she hated that model, its senseless brass and steel! She had felt from the be-

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ginning that she was to be crushed in its grasp at last. And yet it was Geoffrey's soul that was shut up in it; she could not help furthering it and being fascinated by its promise. But she said no more.

She had intimated to Mr. Pastner, in every way she knew, that it was useless for him to seek her directly, and she wished him to understand that it was equally useless to seek her through any interest in Geoffrey and his model. She rebuked herself for that; she knew that his friendship for Geoffrey would have been the same had she not existed. But a defiant mood came and overpowered the mood of perplexity; the very presence of Mr. Pastner brought it. Doubt and trouble spread their wings to fly away; the fact that this man existed made

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doubly vivid to her the existence of Jerome and his love. Why should she sacrifice both herself and Jerome to Geoffrey's ambition? Let him be happy some other way; they could see to that. All that she wanted now was to be alone with her memory of the morning, still to feel the touch of those lips, still those arms about her, still to hear that low voice, still to let all her soul go out in this vivid new phase, this vital experience of love.

Mr. Pastner left his horse under cover, and followed her in, going directly where the light shone in Geoffrey's work-room, which he had left at an earlier hour; for he seemed to be almost as much interested in that invention on which Geoffrey was spending the strength of his poor life as Geoffrey was himself.

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Priscilla put away her wraps, and went into the sitting-room to rest by the low fire in the dusk there, still with her mood of joy upon her. It was not for any long time, however, that she could let this luxury of happiness fill and feed and warm her. Mr. Pastner came down and went out, and Geoffrey's laborious step was on the stair.

"Pastner will stay to tea," he said.

"Oh! Is it necessary?" asked Priscilla.

"Yes. It is necessary," said Geoffrey, with his back against the door. "He is of use to me. I should think even you could appreciate the pains he has taken to get those things for me to-day. He is going to stay late into the night with me. He has gone out to put up his horse now."

"Oh, well, then, I will leave tea

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ready, and Martha can serve it. I am going to bed, for I am tired."

"You are going to do nothing of the sort," cried Geoffrey. "You are going to be at the table and make it bright and cheerful. I am in a glorious frame for getting through my difficulties. If my nerves are not all upset by your tempers, your vagaries, I shall come out on open ground with this thing, and lay my hand on fame and fortune, hunchback or no hunchback."

"Geoffrey dear, why do you dwell on what no one notices after once knowing you? And do you really think I have such tempers?" she asked, with a break in the soft voice.

"I think you are the dearest, the best, the most beautiful of women and sisters. I think you have my life and hopes and salvation in your hand.



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You can help me into heaven or thrust me down to hell. I think you are going to help me into heaven."

Priscilla laughed. But, in spite of herself, her mood was shattering and melting away, and trouble was again surrounding her, vaguely and swiftly as the rising of the mountain mists. "I suppose that means that you want peach marmalade and hot biscuits for tea," she said.

"And some *chili-cum-carne* first. And a pretty toilette, and a bright face, and smiles, and a song, and general indulgence, and all your sweetness." And then he came over and lifted the long fallen tress, and laid his fevered cheek on her cool face, putting his long, weak arms around her. The thought came to her of Jerome kneeling and clasping her so in the morning,

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but, ah, with how different a clasp, in all his mobility and beauty! And now Geoffrey, just on a level with her shoulder as he stood—the pity of it, the horror of it! The tears gushed forth as he caressed her. “You need n’t pity me,” he said, winding the pale tress about her head. “If my invention goes, I want no one’s pity. And as for your affection, has n’t it been mine from our cradle? Are n’t we the same soul? Do you suppose I think for an instant that you are going to be false to me? When this momentary fancy of yours passes, you will see for yourself how idle it was. You will be more glad than I of your escape.”

“False to you?” stammered Priscilla.

But Geoffrey laughed. How long since she had heard him laugh as light-

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ly! And saying, "The blue chiffons now, and smiles, and hot biscuits and marmalade, of course!" he had gone back to his task.

For a pause Priscilla hesitated. She would go to her room and to bed, and let things take care of themselves. And then again the pity of it tore her tender heart. And, moreover, notwithstanding his ill health, his fretfulness and deformity, this brother of hers had a dominating strength of nature; she had a sort of reverence for his intellect, too. To have his contempt was something she could not have endured; to give him pleasure was the habit of her life. Until of late they had been of one mind, one emotion in all things.

She went to her room after she had given old Martha the directions for tea,

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and had laid the table herself, adding a handful of the precious crab-cactus blossoms in a glass vase; and she came down with a shine on her hair, a glow on her cheek, a smile on her lip, dazzling withal in the blue chiffons that Geoffrey liked; and she seemed to Mr. Pastner the very ideal of the bloom of a June morning as it had dawned on him many a time in his dewy gardens far up the hill, under clear, overarching heavens, and with the undulating landscape far below. There was a sort of dreamy sweetness, too, about Priscilla that night, the aura of her earlier happiness yet lingering around her, and curving the corners of her lips with an interior sort of smile, the trouble of her later doubt yet veiling some of the lustre of her eyes. It made both Geoffrey and Mr. Pastner feel a great tenderness for

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her. And while it in no wise changed Geoffrey's determination regarding her, it gave Mr. Pastner pause, till it seemed to him that, let what would come to himself, her happiness must be secured before all things.

Nothing could be gayer or more enchanting than Geoffrey was that night, his high seat on the cushions giving him much the usual dignity of a man at his own table, although it was an exceptional man that would not have appeared something less beside the other, whose great stature and well-knit frame might have belonged to one of the Anakim. And when Martha had taken out the tea things, Priscilla sang—some gentle German *Lieder*, some joyous old Jacobite songs.

“Those are the things to sing,” said Geoffrey — “the people's songs, the

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things full of live emotions, the emotions common to the race."

"The songs that are more than codes and laws," said Mr. Pastner.

"Yes. And sung in such a voice as that! A voice to fire a multitude! What a voice it would be if it had had the training such a voice ought to have! You would be a prima donna assoluta, sister mine. How would it please you to see some great throng hanging breathless on your tones? How would the clapping hands, the tossing flowers, the raptures you gave, the fact that you commanded their tears, their joys, held their beings for the moment in your hand—how would all that please you?"

"Not half so much," said Priscilla, with a laugh, "as singing to you."

"And Pastner. Well, it would

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please me. I would say in my thoughts to that throng, 'See, this is I; part of my being, born at one birth, of one thought, with one life; those tones are mine, or all the same as mine; it is my genius that fills them and wrings your tears; it is I, I who am singing!' Ah, well, it is no use! What did Providence mean," he cried, with a fierce and sudden change from his genial phase, "by giving us such things—you such a voice, me such inventive power—and then holding back all the means for bringing them into use?"

"They are not held back," said Mr. Pastner, suddenly; and it was perhaps bending over the fire toward which he was holding his hands that made the veins stand out so on his forehead. "They are yours if you will."

"Oh," said Priscilla, lightly, "Geof-

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frey's power will prove itself. And as for me, to lift my voice with others, in some great church choir is all the dream I have."

"And dream enough," said Mr. Pastner.

"Well," said Geoffrey, "if I am going to prove myself, I must away to the prover. I think I see my way through that last bearing. Come, Pastner."

Mr. Pastner waited a moment till he was gone, and then went towards Priscilla just turning from the piano. "The great Norse giant," she was saying to herself, conscious all the same of a kindly feeling, as if she could not love one man with all the force of her love and not have a certain warm interest in all other men. And then the calm depth of that gray eye as she



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met its glance made her uneasy, the smile of that rather melancholy mouth, according with the nobility of the white brow over the suntanned face, gave her reassurance, while something about its being fine to have a giant's strength, but tyrannous to use it like a giant, was running through her mind.

"I am a useless piece of humanity," he said, in a low tone, "unless you make me of use. I want you to understand that I and all I have are yours, to hold, to use, to throw away."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Priscilla, thrusting out both her hands before her. But he only bowed and closed the door.



## II

PRISCILLA was so worn out with the fervors and fevers of the day that when her head touched her pillow, she drowsed away at once into a fitful slumber. She had a dull consciousness of voices and steps, partially waking her in what seemed the middle of the night, of a wild rustling and roaring of the wind, of a surprised exclamation about snow, of Geoffrey's protesting voice, of the steps returning, and of her saying to herself wearily that a sudden storm had come up out of that shadow in the mountain-gap, that Geoffrey had not let Mr. Pastner go out in it, but he had put him in the

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spare room; and then she was off again and lost in deep sleep. She awoke suddenly with a sensation that she had overslept herself, that it was bright day. Her next sensations came in rapid successions—that somewhere a stove was smoking, that something was scorching, that the whole outside world was a cloud of sparks, that the house was on fire.

To thrust her feet into a pair of shoes, to throw her wrapper and her long cloak over her, to seize an armful of the first clothing within reach, was all done in the three seconds as she rushed for Geoffrey's room. He was not there; and just as Mr. Pastner, who, also, had hurried there, dashed out of it, old Martha darted by them, screaming, in a voice muffled by the blanket on her head: "He's not there!

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He's out doors! He's gone!" And Priscilla ran with them through a welter of scorching smoke down the stairs and across the little hall, to find the front door still closed and locked. Mr. Pastner threw it open and pushed Priscilla and old Martha out into the snow. "He is not gone out; he is in the workshop!" he cried, and sprang back, the flames, fanned by the fresh air, bursting out about him. It was only a moment or two—it seemed a year to Priscilla and old Martha huddled together, shivering in the storm, with no help near, and the long tongues of flame already shooting from the windows—before Mr. Pastner came round, having sprung from a casement on the back of the house to the roof of the shed below, where he let Geoffrey down to the ground and jumped after him—Geof-

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frey who had at first struggled like a wild-cat, and had then through sheer impotence abandoned himself to his fate—the fate of being saved without the little demon of brass and wood and steel in which he had imprisoned his very soul. “Let the house burn!” he cried fiercely. “Let it burn! It’s only of a piece with all the rest of the way fate uses me! Let it burn to the ground! I wish I was in it! What did you save me for?” But while his imprecations were still rising over the roar of the storm and the crackle of the flames, Pastner had disappeared. In the same instant Priscilla and Martha rushed to the shed where the horse had been tied. They came out, leading at arm’s length the startled and plunging animal, and fastened him to a tree at safe distance, just as Mr.

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Pastner appeared, staggering uncertainly, blackened and singed, in the terrible radiance, and in his arms the best part of the little monster whose overloaded wires had kindled all the blaze.

“Pastner! Pastner!” cried Geoffrey, in a fury of joy. “You are the master-hand! It is n’t only my life you’ve saved. You’ve saved my soul! Never mind if it is n’t all here—a missing bolt, a missing plate—that is easily replaced. Do n’t think I shall forget this. At the risk of your life! There’s friendship! There’s heroism! Now let us enjoy the passing moment. What are you crying for, Priscilla? The house—the home—pshaw! See the flames wallow up the night! See them swallow the black sky! See them glorify the storm! What a sky,

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opening and shutting in splendor with every belch of flame! See these elms—fountains of fire! There is nothing so fine as fire! Every flake of the snow is a spark of it to-night. What? My dear fellow—are you hurt?" For Pastner had sunk against the garden wall, and Priscilla was heaping snow upon his burned hands. But people were already hurrying up, and were taking him off to the nearest house, and Priscilla turned to hasten Geoffrey after them and out of the storm. With the flushed and illuminated snow whirling and twisting about his strange shape and his wild gesticulation like long wreaths and spray of fire itself, the little creature seemed more an imp of fire than a man. "Yes, I will come with you," he said. "I will come with you. For there can be only one outcome to



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this. Pastner has saved my life, and more than my life. His reward lies in your hands. You will give it to him. If I did not feel certain of it, I would plunge into that core of fire just as I surely should have done had he not brought out my works—my more than life!" There was no time for promise or denial, for assertion or argument. Priscilla only felt that she must get this raving fellow under shelter; and she hurried him along after the others—for old Martha had gone on, and was already helping the farmer's wife put a bed in order and send a boy as fast as he could gallop for the doctor. "Oh, he won't die," said Geoffrey, still in a state of gleeful expansion when the doctor had bandaged the burns and promised to come around later in the morning—for it was now

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quite dawn, and Priscilla had got on some clothes and had made Geoffrey eat some porridge. "He won't die! He will live to have his reward. I will see to that myself." For the physician, finding the external injuries but slight, had expressed apprehension concerning the nervous shock and the inhalation of the heated air, and had found great difficulty in reviving his patient from the swoon. "You must go to him," Geoffrey said to Priscilla. "Your touch will do more for him than a regiment of doctors can. Is n't that so, doctor?" And seated at the table, his face bright and alert, his words had superior meaning to those of the little atomy with ineffectual strut, and the doctor interpreted them as they were meant, and of course declared that Priscilla's presence might have the

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tonic effect desired, and she went into the room at once, as she would have gone to the bedside of any sufferer. But as she saw Mr. Pastner lying there, so changed from the strong young giant of a few hours before, the deathly whiteness of his face, the labored fainting breath, smote her to the heart. He had come to this in saving her poor Geoffrey, in saving perhaps Geoffrey's reason, too—at any rate, his one delight in life. And she fell on her knees and in the impulse of gratitude and all the moment's tumultuous excitation of feeling, kissed the poor bandaged hand where it lay extended, exactly as she would have kissed a helpless baby's hand.

Perhaps she would have done precisely the same if she had foreseen the smile that kindled the white counte-

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nance. Mr. Pastner lifted the wounded hand and laid it on hers. Someone pushed a chair toward her; and as she sat there with his fingers lying on hers, the anger of the nerves died away, and under the soothing influence of her touch, of her sorrowful eyes with the yearning pity of their grateful gaze, the eyelids closed, and pain and tension yielded to the opiate at last.

“There! there!” said Geoffrey, when he saw Pastner sleeping. “That ’s all right. I told you so. It is very alarming, this sudden sinking in the collapse after great effort. But these large-framed men are subject to it, I believe. Now I am going to have a bath, and see what I can do in the way of decency. I believe old Martha snatched some clothes for me as she ran. How that old tinder-box burned!

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Well, I have an appointment to meet.” Priscilla, confident that old Martha would attend to him as usual, did not particularly heed him; she was thinking how she would let Jerome hear of her whereabouts; and she knew nothing about it when her brother sallied from the farmhouse and made his way to the village inn, where, in answer to his inquiry, he was told that Mr. Salter had arrived an hour before, on the noon coach from the junction. It was the elder Mr. Salter—Jerome’s all-powerful uncle.

“I have no apology to make for summoning you yesterday, although I hardly hoped for so speedy an answer to my telegram,” said Geoffrey, after Mr. Salter’s rather stiff salutation, a salutation which hardly repressed his surprise at the appear-

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ance of the shapeless little creature with the beautiful face, wearing another man's hat and coat.

But because he was crippled and deformed, Geoffrey never abated an iota of his dignity as a man, and Mr. Salter was at once made to feel that he was dealing with serious concerns. "Nothing but imperative duty would warrant my sending for you in this weather," said Geoffrey. "I hope you have suffered no inconvenience from the storm. Our sharp mountain storms are swift, and I think this has blown itself out. But the fact is," he continued as he moved a hassock along towards a chair, deposited it therein with an effort, and mounted and seated himself on equal terms, "that my sister and your nephew are on the point of a great folly. They fancy themselves in love."

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Mr. Salter made a quick motion of dissent and surprise. But if he would have spoken, he was prevented by Geoffrey's imperious gesture. "Nothing could be worse for my sister," said Geoffrey, "after the subsidence of the temporary fascination. For I know her and her needs. And Jerome—charming fellow though he is—could only make her unhappy in the end. The very quick end. Moreover, I have other views for her, as you, I am sure, have for Jerome."

"Certainly I have!" exclaimed Mr. Salter, too much in earnest to observe the absurd face of things presented by this strange little being's assumption as the arbiter of destiny.

"Quite right," said Geoffrey. "My sister is of no particular family, is without a penny to her name, and her home

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was last night burned to the ground, with nearly all it contained—”

“Indeed! Very unfortunate.”

“Perhaps so. Perhaps not. However, that is neither here nor there. I sent for you to use your influence with Jerome—”

“Most assuredly!”

“Only let me advise you that it will need extreme measures. He told my sister yesterday that you had planned a trip abroad with him in the vacation. I imagine that it may have been through startling her with that that he obtained her admission. She has taught him counterpoint—she is a music teacher—and he has taught her singing—and something else. They have seen much more of each other than I—engaged in my own pursuits—have liked. Perhaps it would be best



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to make the trip immediately; he is doing nothing at college, nothing at all, and will take no honors, even if he secures a degree. That is a pity, with his natural parts. And then he is young."

"May I ask," said Mr. Salter, who had now begun to be amused at this arrogant miniature of a man, who was declining alliance with his nephew, "how old you are?"

"As old as suffering can make a man. 'I am six thousand years old,' said Marat, you may remember. 'I am as old as human suffering!' But that is nothing to the point, either. I presume Jerome will be galloping over from the college to-day. The man who puts his boy in a fresh-water college, supposing he is safe there—"

"Or in a salt-water college either,"

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said Mr. Salter, making it unnecessary to finish the sentence.

“Yes, the only way to prevent youth from having its fling is to shut it up in a crippled body and give it a great idea. Yes, ill news travels post; and Jerome will be over, expecting to find us here at the inn. He will find you. I trust it will be enough.”

“I think you may,” said Mr. Salter grimly. And Jerome Salter learned that it was enough and more when, an hour afterward, he came down the snowy road just broken out round the mountain, and with a piece of hemlock sticking in his hat, a happy, handsome, careless fellow, whose joyous contentment changed to dismay at the sight of his uncle's mocking countenance. There was a stormy hour on his part, an hour of raillery, of play-

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ing with prey, on the uncle's part; and then he rode back with his uncle to his rooms, no longer a radiant young hero, but a whipped boy.

"You must tell her, Geoffrey," wrote Jerome that night. "I can't. I have no choice left, unless I would be thrown out like a plucked fowl on the snow-drift. I leave with my uncle for France to-night. When I come back I know not. He says never. For France? For perdition!"

Geoffrey told Priscilla by placing Jerome's letter before her. "You are light in the balance, you see," said Geoffrey. "His uncle offers him idleness, wealth, and pleasure. You offer him work and love and home. It was easy to see how it would be. And yet one would not have expected treachery from Jerome."

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Priscilla sat alone, after Geoffrey went out, in the little room that had been lent her in the farmhouse. Jerome's letter was open on her knee; but she was not looking at it; her gaze was fixed straight ahead on the dead white wall. She sat there conscious of nothing—simply stunned.

If such a letter had come to her the day but one before, it would have given her no such blow, for at that time she had not allowed herself to recognize her feeling; she had not allowed herself to hope. But yesterday the sun had burst forth, quickening, vitalizing, nourishing her love; it had had clear way; it had grown like a gourd in the night. If a cloud of misty perplexity had followed, still there was the love in its perfect flower. And now, full and throbbing with her very life, what

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blackening breath and blast from the bottomless pit was this that blew over it and smote and withered it? She asked no such question. She was not aware of a single thought or emotion. She sat dumb and dead, staring at the wall, seeing nothing.

The women of the house came to the door and knocked, and asked if she wanted anything, and went away, thinking her exhausted from the night's consternation and fatigue, and gone to sleep. She never heard them. The world might have crashed to its end, with the heavens rolling together like a scroll, she would not have known it.

There was a soft glow in the air when she became conscious that she was alive, with a piece of paper on her knee that was like a death-warrant—alive and utterly wretched. It was

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another day, but the sun had not yet risen; the daylight bubbled in the great cup of the hills, and the whole air was full of foaming gold; a faint rose-bloom covered the long stretch of the interval, deepening far off into rosy amethyst, and all at once every crag and scar and face of rock burst into a blaze of whiteness burning to golden glory, and into clear azure sailed the sun. What had all this splendor to do with her? Oh, nothing! And what was her pain in the midst of it? Oh, again nothing. How serene, how indifferent, how unloving was nature! Oh, no; how calm, how strong, how always the same, always there to be found, the same now and forever, with its calm and its strength, giving rest!

Priscilla broke the ice in her pitcher

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for a long draught of water; then she went to bed for a couple of hours, and she crept down stairs at last, very faint and white, to be put in a warm corner by the farmer's wife and fed from her one china bowl with the daintiest food she had. She watched her chance, when the good woman's back was turned, to put Jerome's letter into the fire. And presently she found her cloak, and tied a little shawl over her head, and went out mechanically to give one of the lessons that had been interrupted yesterday.

Geoffrey greeted her when she came in towards noon, with an angry reproof for exposing herself as she had done, with insufficient dress. "You seem to think," he said, "that there is no one but yourself in the world. Does it never occur to you what will become of me,

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helpless and crippled, if you should get your death by this sort of recklessness?"

"Oh," said Priscilla, something bitterly, something wearily, as if she cared nothing, "you will always have the model."

"My model! Do you know what that reckless fellow did in bringing it out? He turned it upside down, broke the delicate gearing, lost the diamond pivots, all but ruined it—ruined it!"

"Oh, Geoffrey, when the poor soul tried to save it for you."

"The poor soul! Pastner!" with a sharp laugh. "You had better say he tried to destroy it! There is nothing but the idea left—almost nothing! And how am I to revive that out of chaos, with house and home gone, with no money, no friends, no peace, no



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quiet? For if we ever get rooms anywhere, that infernal piano of your scholars, with its incessant kringle-krangle, will grind into my brain like a knife-sharpener! I shall go mad; that is what I shall do."

Priscilla saw that he was wrought to a pitch of exasperation that was nearly irresponsible. In the midst of her misery she felt that if all her cheer was taken from her, her care yet remained. "You shall have all the quiet you want, dear," she said. "I will give the lessons somewhere else. I suppose the insurance will rebuild the house—"

"Nothing of the sort," said Geoffrey. "That gave out last year."

"Geoffrey!"

"Yes. I had to take the premium money for my brass-work. What else

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was I to do? I ask you, what else was I to do, Priscilla?"

"I thought," said she, "that Mr. Pastner gave you the brass-work."

"Do you think I would accept that from him, when the only thing I could give him in return was denied him?" letting himself down to the floor, and walking to and fro in a frantic haste that had nothing ludicrous in it for Priscilla, only something heart-breaking. "I said to myself: 'I shall finish the model now. When it is done, it brings in far more than house and insurance, than thousands, than hundreds of thousands of insurance!' It is my fortune and yours together!" he cried, wringing his hands. "It is my hope, my fame, my glory!"

"I am afraid it will never be done," said Priscilla, gathering up her things.

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"It rests with you," he cried. "Whether it is ever done or not rests with you!"

She turned and looked at him, bewildered. "With you," he said. "You have the power. You can make me, or you can break me. I am clay in your hands." He flung himself down before the fire, his voice rising almost to a scream, and hid his face in his arms, a forlorn, half-crazed little wretch, groveling like a worm on the good housewife's strip of carpet there.

"I do n't know what you mean," said Priscilla. "Hush, Geoffrey; you are acting like a child; you will wake Mr. Pastner; they told me he was asleep when I came in."

"What is it to you whether he sleeps or not?" he answered, his voice half stifled in the rug.

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"I do n't understand you."

"You understand me well enough. You know if you will marry Pastner that all he has is as good as mine; that then I can finish my work; that I cannot take the money from him unless he is my brother; that I will not. He will die, they say, and it would have been such a mere form, and for such a little while, and now, now—oh, selfish, selfish, unnatural and selfish!"

"Geoffrey! My poor boy! my darling!" she exclaimed, kneeling beside him. "You are not yourself."

"How can I be myself," he sobbed, "with my life wrecked—the miserable little fraction of life that I had—"

It was true. She thought, as she looked at him, how terribly true. It was a miserable little fraction of life that he had. She had always been

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troubled with the sense that she herself had absorbed all the strength and elasticity, and had left him only the worthless remnant. She had tried to make it up to him by unceasing care and love and fostering. He had been the one object of her days, till that balestar of Jerome's beauty and charm rose over her, till this strange glamour of passion had overshadowed her. That passion was dead. Oh, not only dead, but could it ever have existed? Jerome, false to her, treacherous to love, annihilated himself. That love was dead. This love, at any rate, remained, must always remain, could never die. As she rose and walked up and down the room her sore heart ached anew for the poor little creature lying there, a mockery of humanity, sensitive with the sensitive nerves of genius, sensitive

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with the nerves of a frame whose every nerve was bristling, was a sharp agony. She felt it would be little to die for him; she felt, in the great yearning that went out to him, that it was little even to live for him. She had given her own way for his all her life. Why cease now?

She went and stooped over him. "I will marry Mr. Pastner," she said, gently, and then went out of the room.

For a moment or two the strange, wayward being lay there, letting his passion storm itself out; then sobs and tears and whispers ceased, as they cease with a tired child; he rolled over towards the fire, and snapped his fingers at the dropping coals, and stayed awhile taking his rest.

It was not many minutes, however, before the little man was all alert again,

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refreshed and ready for the fray, and he dusted himself, and went up to his friend's room.

Mr. Pastner was resting quietly, under a mild opiate.

“This is no place for you, Pastner,” Geoffrey said, rousing him. “It is no place for Priscilla. If she is to nurse you back to strength, you should be removed at once to your own house. That is what the doctor thinks best. And if you are going to be removed at all, it may as well be now as any day, my dear boy.”

A flush mounted the pale forehead; for the instant the lethargy was all gone; a glance of inquiry shot from the eager eye.

“Well,” said Geoffrey, “I suppose you know best about it. Perhaps I am too abrupt. I can only speak for Pris-

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cilla. When she saw you yesterday morning and kissed that hand of yours she confessed it all."

"You think so?" murmured Pastner.

"I know so."

"It —it seems impossible."

"That is because you have been blind these last weeks. Do you think a girl's No is always No? There are other telltales than the tongue. At any rate, Priscilla— Well, I have gathered her wishes, and they are yours. As for what remains, we can send up the hill for the long sleigh, with the seats out, and a single mattress in it, and you can be laid in that, just as you are, wrapped in all the blankets necessary, and covered with the furs. The chestnuts will carry you up the hill in twenty minutes, and Priscilla will follow along in the cutter;



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and that can come back for me. I will see to it at once if you say so."

"If I say so!" whispered the other.

"And have the minister here."

Mr. Pastner opened his eyes wide, as if a great awe obliged him, a doubt, a terror, a joy, an assurance. "Yes," he breathed—"yes." And in the pause before the other left the room he seemed to be asleep again. But it was not sleep. It was more like a trance of still delight, and then a measuring of himself and his desert and his power to give happiness, a resolve to be worthy of so benign a fate as this that had befallen him.

Geoffrey brought Priscilla into the room presently, and seated her by the bed, so that when their friend opened his eyes they should rest first on her. He had told her that Mr. Pastner

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wished to be married and removed to the hill at once, which was his arrangement of the truth. And Priscilla, feeling that if it was to be, it might as well be now as any time, had made no objection. She was doing it for Geoffrey—her poor Geoffrey; let it be done with a good grace. And if the man were dying, why not give him this one happiness for the end? She was in a mist, in a dream; her moral sense was benumbed by the blow she had received. Moving slowly, looking vaguely, whether it were right or wrong she never asked. It was to be done. It was all she could do for Geoffrey.

But when Mr. Pastner at length opened his eyes again and met hers, such a shining of sudden joy filled them that through all her semi-stupor

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it touched her with a new sensation, as if Ithuriel's lance of light had penetrated the darkness, and given her a glimpse of the injury she might be doing him. A momentary glimpse only; it was gone with the sound of Geoffrey's voice in the next room; but it had sent a soft sweeping blush over her face, a blush that made her look infinitely lovely.

"Are you sure?" he murmured. "Is it so? Are you—after all—are you going to be my wife?"

She bent her head.

"Do you love me, then, Priscilla?" he said. "Stoop down and kiss me if you love me, dear. Or am I only dreaming? If you are a dream, stoop down and kiss me all the same."

She hesitated half a moment. Love him. There was no such thing as love.

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She had just proved it. But stoop down and kiss him? Yes, she could do that for any sick and suffering soul. But she did not say to her own perception that she was a dream, or that she was in a dream, dazed, and but half aware of herself, aware only of the thing that was straight before her. She stooped down and kissed him, rosy still, but not with any sense of shame. And then Geoffrey and the minister had come, and she went through her part in the same unruffled, half-conscious way, and then helped wrap her husband in the blankets and the robes, and the men took him down to the big sleigh, and laid him in, and covered him, and dashed away; and she put on her cloak and the little shawl of the farmer's wife, and followed in the cutter, as it had been ar-

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ranged, and was up at the great house on the high hill-side just as Mr. Pastner had been made comfortable in his own room.

She looked round the spacious room where the sun poured in over oriental rug and costly carving, and the wide windows framed their splendid mountain picture of snowy hill and violet distance, with no sense that it was hers, that now she was mistress of noble mansion or princely fortune, with no other sense than that she was here, and that the next thing to do was to sit down by the bedside. Something had delayed Geoffrey a few moments. She was listening for him, unaware that that was the only thought in her mind. She sat looking straight before her till she heard him. Then she rose and laid aside her cloak.

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Mr. Pastner's eyes followed her. "My wife," he said. She came to him. "I am not going to die," he whispered. "I might have died. You have saved me. Now I shall be well." And then, in the stroke of a flash of lightning, Priscilla felt not the injury she had done this man, but that she had made herself a prisoner, and that Jerome Salter was abroad in the world. And she fell down and hid her face in the coverlet.

What was Jerome Salter to her? Nothing. Nothing indeed—but still—oh, the place was sore, so sore! Her husband lifted his well hand and laid it on her head as she knelt. It sent a shudder through her; she trembled from head to foot. Oh, how unworthy of that kind touch! Heaven help her!

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Her heart was broken—her heart was broken!

He thought she was praying. And so, in the real truth of things, she was—a prayer that had its own answer. What did those women do whose joy on earth had ceased—those sisterhoods of holy women? They cared for the sick and dying. Here was one sick and but lately dying at her hand. When, at sound of Geoffrey's step she arose, the smile on Mr. Pastner's face was radiant.

"I want you—to go over the—house—and look at your domain," he said, laboriously, the courtesy of his nature triumphing over his weakness and his disconnected thought. "Or will you wait—till I can take you?"

"I shall have to wait," she answered, "for it is time I went to give my afternoon lesson."

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He looked at her an instant, a little puzzled. "Your lesson?" And then he laughed, even in his faintness. "You sweet, simple heart!" he said. "Do n't you know—there are no more music lessons?"

"There—there must be," said Priscilla.

"My dear fellow," said Geoffrey, coming in, "how you have revived! You needed the counter-shock. Ah, happiness is a great tonic."

"Look here," murmured Mr. Pastner, grimly. "Priscilla thinks—she must—go on with her lessons."

Geoffrey laughed. "You can't give lessons and take care of your husband," he said.

"We—must buy out the lessons," said the other, smilingly. "Will you attend to all that, Geoffrey?" And



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now, thoroughly tired out, he was asleep almost before Geoffrey replied.

It was as Geoffrey had said—happiness is a great tonic. It can lift the force of a shock to the nerves when it comes like a shock itself; and if it cannot mend broken ribs or cure burns or repair the injury of interior surfaces, it can make the conditions favorable for the healing of all hurt. To see Priscilla's face of what he deemed gentle concern, to see her moving about, to hear her sweet low tones, to be sensible of her surpassing beauty, to note the intense tenderness and pity of the eyes that followed Geoffrey, to see the color mount the rich velvet of her cheek sometimes at idle words of his—he could not conjecture why—was all an elixir of life. As before this he had not cared to live, now he was de-

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terminated not to die. He did not observe that his wife gave him no caresses, that her morning and evening kiss was a perfunctory matter: there was something pleasant to him in this chaste shyness; he did not know that even that kiss was given through the irresistible impulse of compassion. And when, at his wish, Geoffrey supplied her with costly garments and, laid some jewels in her hands, he did not love her less that she left the jewels where she dropped them. Even a suspicion of her apathy did not penetrate through his own weakness, and he did not know it was only because she found it then all but impossible to sing, that she covered over many a long lapse into silence by the gentle playing of dreamy nocturnes. Nor did any sense of the wealth now hers,

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or of the luxury and charm of the house appear to have the least effect upon her consciousness; her eye was insensible to the soft tones of the draperies and of the deep pile in which she set her feet; her frame did not feel the cushioned ease of low silken arm-chairs and divans; she had ceased to be sensitive to beauty in picture or sculpture, or in the china that was priceless as precious stones, and the ring of the gold plate, whose vibration gave Geoffrey's nerves a pleasant thrill like music, was unheard by her. She was benumbed through all the avenues by which pleasure had ever reached her.

The fact with Priscilla was that the blow which had killed her love had nearly killed her, not in her physical but in her mental and moral being.

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She felt no repulsion for Mr. Pastner, no hostility towards him; she was neither glad nor sorry that he recovered. Nothing about him affected her personally. His superb stature, the purity of his large Northern type, the fearless clearness of his great gray eyes, the wholesome sweetness of his mouth, the open frankness of his countenance, the nobility and generosity of his nature, all this had mattered nothing to her when he was well; it could not matter less now. She experienced only one simple series of emotions in relation to him,—a deep and kindly gratitude that he had saved Geoffrey's life, and what was more than life to Geoffrey, the model; that of course she belonged to him, but as the payment of a debt, as the price of Geoffrey's happiness; that it all gave Geof-

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frey contentment—Geoffrey, to whom so much of happiness had been denied; and that for herself it was no sort of consequence whatever, any more than what became of her ashes after she was dead. If she had been a shadow, she could hardly have felt less.

But now, as soon as the burns on Mr. Pastner's hand and side began to heal, they healed rapidly; and with that the strength which the nervous shock had so suddenly prostrated began to come back to him. He was showing the vivid interest in things about him that he used to show. He was inquiring into the condition of the model, and where its fragments had been set up, and into the condition of Geoffrey's mind regarding it as well. He could be assisted the length of the room. Then he could go up and

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down stairs. Then he could have his fur coat put on and walk on the piazza. The doctor declared it needed only a Southern month or two to complete the cure. "Come," he said, one day, "now we will have our wedding journey."

"And will Geoffrey go, too?" asked Priscilla, wistfully.

"Why — if — if he will — if you wish," stammered Mr. Pastner.

"Not I," laughed Geoffrey. "What are you thinking of, Priscilla? And leave my model and the unlimited bank account you make mine for its sake—"

"For Priscilla's sake," said Mr. Pastner.

"For no matter whose sake! And make a holy show of myself in the great world? Not I. Two are company. Go and take your pleasure and

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come back to me. The house, the mountains, the model, and I will all be here."

And Mr. Pastner—too full of gladness in his recovery, in the return of strength, in the assurance of health, in the companionship of his wife, a gladness all hope of which he had abandoned, to notice that it was not she who was full of anything of the sort, to notice that she was only full of patience—folded round his wife the rich furs that had been ordered for her, and took her on her wedding journey.

It was a brief wedding journey.

To Geoffrey, drawing and designing, rapt in his ideas, his imaginings, his creating, it seemed a mere morning excursion that brought them back again—Priscilla very pale and stately, Mr. Pastner paler and more stately still.

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Geoffrey asked no questions; he wished to hear nothing. Perhaps it did not occur to him that there was anything to hear. At any rate, he never did know anything about that bitter hour when the husband learned of the mistake he had made, but refused to give his wife the freedom she woke from her trance sufficiently to ask. No, she was his care still; the mountain house should still be hers; she should have Geoffrey there as she had had him before; and for what remained, although they had made a sad error, she was his wife, and must abide by it, and live as became his wife. She was not to be troubled by his presence. And then for a moment he had thrown his arms about her in a forgetfulness of love and grief, and had flung her away as quickly, angry that



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even then she stood passive, with no resistance, not only with no sign of fervor, but with no sign of affront.

Mr. Pastner staid a week or two at the mountain house, attending to various requisite details, and acquainting Geoffrey with bank affairs and other matters.

“My health,” he said to Geoffrey, “and some important arrangements make it necessary that I should be absent. You will take care of my wife?”

“Of Priscilla? Of course,” said Geoffrey. “But absent — why, I do n’t see what I am going to do without you. Not for long, I hope. Priscilla takes no interest whatever now in what I am doing. Priscilla is quite a different woman since the fire. I think it shocked her. She is simply numb—wrapped up in herself. I want

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you, I need you here, every day, George, to discuss these new bearings. Now here is a problem—”

“My dear man,” said Mr. Pastner, “I have been confronted with a more serious problem, and am unable to solve it. And there is the whistle of the train round the mountain. Good-by!”

### III

IT was a languid and silent young matron who presided at the table in those long, lonely days, when Geoffrey, nervous, elate, and talkative, was wheeled in by the man that Mr. Pastner had provided for him, and filled the time with dissertations upon his work.

“It is a most singularly constructed universe,” he exclaimed, after they were alone, one noon. “All things are so interconnected. You touch one string and all the others vibrate. Here, in finishing one invention, I find myself on the verge of something as far beyond that as the universe of Orion

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is beyond the sun and moon and seven stars. It tempts me to proceed with it, to look into it a little further— Why don't you say something, Priscilla? Why don't you speak? I expected you would remonstrate, you would urge me to stick to my last—that is my first—”

“Oh, no,” said Priscilla. “I would rather you did what you like best to do.”

“I should think you were bewitched!” cried Geoffrey. “Possessed! Is it possible that Jerome Salter—”

“Do not speak of him!” exclaimed Priscilla, with her blue eyes sparkling. “I do not know him. He is dead. He never existed.”

“That is all right. Still, although I had an affection for the fellow my-

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self, he is not quite worth such heroics."

"No," she said. "That is true."

"In point of fact," said Geoffrey, cracking a nut, "I believe he is alive and enjoying himself very well, after the fashion of the prodigal son, in Paris, although he has not yet come to the husks." But as she said no more, he went on: "Well, then, with no regrets for Salter, and married to a man of the Northern Sagas, with more money than you know how to spend, and mistress of this baronial house, what in the world is the matter with you? You seem to be more dead than alive!"

"I am," she said.

But, whether or no, from day to day Priscilla went through the ordinary motions of life. She accepted service

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at the hands of her maids; she agreed to what the housekeeper said; she went out to walk every morning, if the horses did not come round first; if they did, she went to drive. She received the calls of her old music scholars, of the college youths and dons who had been wont to call upon her before, of the village gentry who had not been wont to call before. She listened, as if her life depended on it, to all that Geoffrey said about his new principle of motion; and she read every week the letter that arrived from her husband.

“Geoffrey, dear,” she said, humbly, one twilight when he was playing out one of his miseries, “play to me some happy things. You are happy now, Geoffrey, are you not?”

“I!”

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“Do you suppose any one is happy?” she asked, wistfully.

“For a moment, the bird on the bough. Play happy things? There is no happy music. Under it all is the note of sorrow. The maddest, merriest dance music is the saddest of the whole. That note of sorrow—do you suppose I, with my findings, should not find that?”

“My poor child! I had hoped I had made you happy.”

“You?” he said, with mild surprise on his beautiful face. “You might say Pastner had. You might say Pastner had tried. But it was idle effort. How shall I ever be happy? If I had an answer from the genius dwelling inside the photosphere—after the first instant it would be I, this little manikin.” Priscilla’s

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heart was a lump of lead as she heard him.

And so it was all for nothing.

Dejection hung over her now, like a shroud; the days were so long, so slow; there was nothing they could bring her, she said. She would have been satisfied were each day the last; but she did not even wish to die. Only one day was marked more distinctly than another because on such a day a letter came, an unwelcome letter.

They were such letters as any friend might write another. He hoped she was well; he trusted that Geoffrey was succeeding; he felt that Geoffrey's ideas were inspirations, if only they could be made practicable; he sent her some new music that he had heard, and told of the way it moved the throng at the concert. He was in New York,



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and had seen a play—he described it to her; he was in Washington, and had seen Congress at work—he made her see it, too; he was in New Orleans, and he took her with him to the French market; he was tarpon-fishing, and he would have her share the excitement and danger with him. How was she to tell with what heart-beats, with what heart-sinking, with what heart-ache these calm and pleasant pages were written? Nothing in them whispered to her the sharp regret at the ruin of her young life, the lonely bitterness over the ruin of his own. It did not seem that he who wrote them could be in the least unhappy.

Opening them, at first with hesitation, even with reluctance, Priscilla presently found herself reading them a second time, found herself looking for them.

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At all events they made a break. One day, she did not know why, but probably because she was human and kind, she answered one of them—briefly enough, but telling him in a page or two of the affairs of the big farm as they came to her. His letters to her began simply enough with “My dear Wife” —a form merely. It seemed only natural and necessary that she should say “My dear Husband,” as he had pitched the tone; and she signed hers “Priscilla.” At least she owed him that.

The winter had worn away at last, with Priscilla sometimes buried in vast snow-drifts, her German lexicon, a long stretch of practice, or rather purposeless study of counterpoint and composition for companion, walking to-day, driving far to-morrow, listening to Geoffrey,

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soothing his discontents, sympathizing with his enthusiasm, and trying to understand what it was all about and why he cared. Now the wild March winds had blown the vapors from the hills in long scarfs and webs, and off and away to distant skies, and the April rains were melting the snow in the deeper valleys and filling the air with fresh earthy scents, and there were gauzy veils of pale blue bloom over all the landscape, now and then letting out sudden visions of the hill-tops like glorified spirits looking on the earth.

Priscilla had been walking in the garden, where the borders had been uncovered, the paths raked, and all made ready for the first warm weather that should allow the plants to be brought from the greenhouse. She stopped, leaning her arm on the broad parapet

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which walled one edge of the garden over a considerable precipice under which a rushing brook brawled on its way to the lakes below. Far stretched the tender blue sky with a brooding mother-love across the earth, the earth far-stretching too, with hills and intervals all mirroring the soft azures of the heaven, shadowing under passing clouds to violet that melted into the somber depth of great forests, into the green gilding of springing wheat, the dun gold of dry ploughed fields—all large and lovely and full of life. As she leaned there and looked out, suddenly she felt herself suffused with joy, as if on the instant she had recognized the inner meaning of all nature, the hidden things of creation—had for the first time understood that earth was so beautiful, fate was so kind, God was

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so near. As her glance came back from the peacefulness of the great view, it fell on a little mother-bird sitting serenely in her lately-built nest and regarding her fearlessly with her soft black eye. Tears rushed to Priscilla's eyes, tears of a quick delight; she moved gently away, followed by that fearless glance. "I will not hurt you, little bird," she said; "we are just two mothers together!"

But the letter which she had in her hand was the last that she mailed to her husband that year. She could not speak of her great sweet secret—that was impossible—and it filled all her thoughts. He wrote that he missed her letters, short as they were; but they had been given out of her goodness, and feeling that he had no claim, he must abide her will in the matter.

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He never said how hard it was for him to live without her, without other word of her than the bare mention that came from Geoffrey, absorbed in his levers and balances, how hard to write on with his own weekly letter and have no sign in response.

But he did write on. He had established himself for the time in a hunting region not too remote from telegraphs and post-offices; he told her of the hunt, of the sounds and sights of nature, but he never reproached her with being the cause of his isolation from the world of men. And without her knowledge of the process, the strength and largeness, the purity and wholesomeness of his nature must have affected her as she read.

The summer followed the spring. The house, the gardens, were full of

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Priscilla's singing, the clear voice caroling to heaven, for she was out-doors most of the time. She seemed to invite the sunshine into her being; she ran down drenched with showers; she walked beside Geoffrey's pony up the rocky ways to the eagles' nests, and looked at the young eaglets; and she made Geoffrey for a while find pleasure in the strength of the hills.

Then the grapes were ripe on every sunny ledge; the days were short as they were splendid; storms washed the heavens of stain; and Priscilla's baby came like the last drop of the expressed sweetness of the year, when the world was all an illumination of gold and scarlet glory.

If an earthquake had moved the ground from under his feet, Mr. Pastner would have been no more con-

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founded than he was one bright October day by a telegram from Geoffrey: "Your son came to-day. Priscilla happy with her baby. Everything propitious. Think I have discovered a new force."

A new force! What new force was needed in such a world as this? His son! Priscilla's baby! For an instant his feet were on fire to go to her.

But what was this? Priscilla happy with her baby! She did not ask for him; she did not think of him; she did not say, "Come!" He had declared to her that she would never see him till she sent for him. He took his gun and went out into the woods; but the feathered things might have alighted on that strong arm; the snake needed not slip away from that powerful tread; the branches could bend and brush



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that lordly head unfelt; with this great joy and awe upon him he could not take life, he who had given life. The mother-bears, the trembling cubs, the birds starting from covert—they were all safe that day.



## IV

AS for Priscilla, she had no time to think of Mr. Pastner. The day was not long enough for her to think of her baby in. She was well and strong and about again very shortly, in-doors and out, the color in her cheek, the splendor on her hair, the smile on her lips, and always her baby in her arms—the sleeping, smiling baby, the baby that all the house worshiped, and that old Martha, who had never left Priscilla, seemed to think was the first child ever made. Even Geoffrey came often and looked at it.

“Happy little devil!” said he.  
“Yes, one happy thing in the world,

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for the time being. He has n't the soul vexed out of him with springs that won't spring, with electric currents that defy him. By the way, I think I am finding out how to photograph the unseen colors, Priscilla—if the day were twice as long, and I could spare the time from my main purpose. But the thing has so many hitches; it is very depressing, Priscilla."

To photograph unseen colors! What other colors were needed than the damask of this little velvet cheek, the heaven-blue of these big eyes? She was so full of the joy of them that she had not even the power to feel Geoffrey's depression, that once would have made the earth dark for her. She had been wandering in a desert; and she had suddenly come upon waving palms and running waters and blossoming

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boughs and singing birds. She sang like a bird herself to her baby all day long, about the house or out in the snow, where she fearlessly carried him, —songs the sweetness of which no pen might even note, the mere bubblings of happiness—if it were really happiness, and not a sort of ecstatic excitement.

And how the boy grew! How radiant he was—to her there seemed to be a very nimbus of light and health about him. What a great handsome cherub of a child, kicking and reaching and crooning and cooing in the fulness of strength and life! She took him on her arm, one mild day of the early spring, and went through the great mansion which, unused or not, the housekeeper always kept in such perfect order that a particle of dust finding itself there would have been sure

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it had lost its way and have hurried out again. She had never stepped over the threshold of any other door in it than those of her own room and Geoffrey's, and the parlors and dining-room of the lower floor. It had been her prison in those first dreary months. But now it was her boy's home, her little son's possession; he must see it—she would see it with him. And throned on her arm he went with her into the great library and the music-room beyond, from which the grand piano had been wheeled for her use into the drawing-room, looking at the marbles, the bronzes, the paintings, taking the cover from the gilded harp, and running her fingers through the strings, to the child's apparent pleasure; for already he loved music.

She went on, into the chambers

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above, and into the great attic where lay the innumerable playthings of another child—the skates, the sleds, the velocipede, the drawing-table, the tools, the lathe, the sword and spear and shield of his own young carving, the books that other child used to read, the pipe he used to blow tunes out of.

Then Priscilla came down to the room that had been the sitting-room of her child's great-grandmother, a room lined with old portraits of the dead and gone Pastners, with their calm, proud, fair faces. Would her boy be as strong, as fine as they? The question struck her suddenly, had she taken the pains to make him so by first making herself all that was noble? And just as suddenly she asked herself could she make him this, she alone and

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without help? And she held him so closely, half-smothering him with her swift caresses, that the little fellow cried out; and going into the next room she was obliged to sit down and pacify him.

It was the room which had belonged especially to her husband's mother. It had been hung long since in tapestries, of pale blues and greens, in a design of scrolls and vases and flowers; and there were old Jacobite tables and consoles there of tarnished silver, on which lay some miniatures, painted in pale water-colors. It had about it an indescribable atmosphere of cool and innocent refinement. From its balconied windows stretched a wide ring of distant purple mountain-peaks touched with gold, and a valley view where, through sunbeams, the darkest tinges



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of verdure melted into deep violet, and a green and purple sea of hills seemed to toss below, now and then, all the world of soft rich sheen and color, as a shower or a cloud passed over, spanned by a fleeting rainbow.

But it was not the view, of course, that had suddenly hushed the child's crying. She looked about her to find what it was he saw that so pleased him. His tearful eyes were shining like violets wet with dew, his mouth was open with a glad cry, his arms were lifted toward a portrait on the wall—the full length portrait of her husband. There George Pastner stood, as some artist had placed him, in the pride of his young manhood, the bloom of youth on his face, the light on his thick, fair locks, his eagle eye softened by the irradiating smile,

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almost stepping from the frame, like some proud young Viking, with his lofty stature and his haughty head. "Did the child know his father?" she was saying then. Oh, no, of course not; that was absurd, that was impossible! He only saw a piece of splendid color, and he saw, too, perhaps, a remarkably vivid presentment of youth and courage, of a strong and noble man, he who had hitherto seen only the servants, the wizened little village doctor, the dwarf wheeled about in his chair.

But Priscilla herself — she knew him. She gazed at him all at once with a new recognition, too. Those eyes seemed to be meeting hers; those lips were about to part to speak to her; that smile was for her—oh, perhaps for her and his boy! A thrill shot through

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her from head to foot—a sudden, unexpected, unwished-for thrill—a wild, sweet thrill that made her hide her eyes in the little silken threads of the child's thin curls, and then hurry from the room with him, as if the eyes of the portrait saw and knew it all. For it was he who had given her the treasure of her child.

But she came back into that room later in the day, alone, when the western sunbeam lay full upon the portrait, bringing out the innermost secrets of its power. She came into it by lamp-light, holding the lamp over her head so that she might throw another light on it and yet new expression. She came back the next day, and then, she could hardly have said why, every day, and many times a day.

One morning she took out all the

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letters that she had had from her husband—those which she had hardly read at all at first, those which began to command her attention, those for which she had come to look—and she read them through again—gentle, calm, kind letters, taking everything as a matter of course, sending always now a message to the last Pastner. “My love to my little child,” he said in one. “Kiss my dear boy for me,” said another. “Say for me, sometimes, if you can, a kind word to my son.” What sort of a man was he, she wondered then, not to hate her, not to punish her, not to take the child away from her, as he could? She bent over the crib, where the child slept among his lawns and laces, in an agony of emotion, of love for him, of fear for herself, of confusion, alarm, of joy, of she knew not what.

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She took the boy with her into that room which had become like an oratory. What was this she was doing with the child who already had begun to lisp "mamma?"—she was teaching him to look at the portrait and say "papa." She never let him quite touch the portrait; she held him away from it, but on this side and on that; she raised or lowered a shade to change the aspect and glance; she had him observe the luminous eye following him, the glad smile greeting him. She tried to make it seem a live and breathing thing to the boy; a man, a friend, a protector, stepping from that sunbeam to their side, one to be joyously welcomed—even to a baby's comprehension a something above and beyond and dear. The child, she reasoned, should have some ideal of loftiness for

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his standard. If he never did in his life anything with the thought of which he could not meet those searching eyes! Her boy, with his storms and tempers and loves, his strong individuality, who ought to have a father to keep him safe! How many of the race there had been for him to be proud of—the old soldier with his sword, the first of the line since it left the Swedish shore; the old minister with his angelic brow the last! If this, the fourth George Pastner, should bring disrepute upon them because his mother had kept from him the father whose strength of nature and inheritance of law could have held him true to his race and name!

At other times Priscilla thought it would be no harm to read the letters her husband had written to his mother,

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when a boy, the letters she had written him; they might teach her how to direct this child of their blood and likeness. It seemed as if she were reading some sacred poem in the story of that innocent youth and tender mother's care, the boy away at school, on journeys with his father, first seeing the great world outside. He had taken her to one of the very places mentioned in the later letters; she saw how much it had meant to him, and how she had ruined it.

One day, at last, the baby was playing in his bath, the wet rings of his hair making a glory in the sunlight that overlay the glowing little face and glistening in all the water-drops of his splashing. What a pleasure it was to see him, to hear his inarticulate cries of joy, to seize him and take him out,

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struggling and lifting up his voice in rebellion! "Papa! papa!" she said, commandingly. And the child stopped his outcry and began babbling the same sound, eager to be taken to the portrait. And all in a breath it rushed over Priscilla that she was guilty of an unspeakable outrage in keeping such a rapture as the daily sight and sound and care of this child from his father.

Geoffrey had left his work-room one evening some days later, and was sitting at the piano when Priscilla came down to dinner. He was in one of his despairs, which were as frequent with him as his triumphs—indeed, rather more so. The thing he sought perpetually eluded him—it was just before him. He could put his hand on it; it was not there; but mocking him,



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escaping him, giving him flying glimpses of glorious hope, ever going on before. It seemed to him now that he should live his whole worthless life over that model, yet never attain his end; and he was pouring his sorrows out at the piano, as few knew how better than Geoffrey. It was his woe-begone playing which always would quiet the little George when any too great excitement set his nerves dancing. Priscilla had left the playing to Geoffrey, seldom touching the piano herself if he were around, thinking it was only justice to let him have some of the divine happiness of giving pleasure to the household idol. She sang to the boy, to be sure, sang loud and sweet and clear the best she knew; sometimes when she carried him outdoors and singing so, it might have

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seemed like angels' voices echoing from scaur to scaur.

"You will deafen the child," said Geoffrey, meeting her as he wheeled himself through one of the garden walks, coming from his work-room.

"He likes it," laughed Priscilla. And then she remembered how Geoffrey had tried to influence her fancy toward George Pastner once by visions of the training her voice could have with his money.

"I declare," said Geoffrey, looking at her severely, "I never would have believed a little thing could have made such a difference in you —"

"He is not a little thing!" cried Priscilla, indignantly, the red starting to her cheek. "Yes, he is! A dear little thing! A darling little thing! His mother's —"

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"You are entirely lost in him!" her brother exclaimed, angrily.

"I should n't think you cared for him at all!" she cried. "Your own nephew!"

"The boy is well enough, quite well enough; very promising. And I am thankful every time I see him that he has n't a hunched back or a club-foot —"

"Geoffrey!"

"But he will have, if you go climbing round on these mountain paths with him the way you do. The very dogs who follow you disapprove of it. And as for me, once I could command your attention a moment. Now I might discover how to write messages to Mars on space, and it would n't interest you so much as the fact that the baby has two little teeth almost through. More than that, you have

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degenerated to such an extent it would n't interest you in the least."

"Oh, Geoffrey, do you think so?" And she laid the child in the grass and stood pleadingly with her hands on the wheel-chair. "Oh, you know better," she said. "You know I am as eager for your success as you are. But the baby is such a surprise to me; he is such a care, too—such a pleasure. And you know I have so little other pleasure—"

"So little pleasure!" roared Geoffrey. "You, full of health and well-being and winning looks and fine possibilities, with so little pleasure! You, with a fortune to spend, a prince for a husband! Where is your husband, Priscilla? What is he staying away for like this? It is beginning to excite remark. It may be business, but it is

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very queer business. Have you had a falling out, Priscilla? I ask you, have you had a falling out?"

"How could we have a falling out?" faltered Priscilla. "My poor, dear boy," she said then, carrying the war into Africa, "you are completely tired with your hard study. Why do n't you put it away a little while?"

"Put it away! Put my life and soul and hope and joy and sorrow away! Why do n't you put your baby away?"

"Put my baby away!" cried Priscilla, running to catch him up. "But, Geoffrey, dear," she said, as she ran, "it would really do you good—the change—and rest your brain. And you could come back to that thing—"

"That thing! It's a dozen things!"

"Well, to all of those problems, and see your way straight to conquer

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them, if you would go away—would go down to see George —”

“In that North Carolina gold mine? I?”

“And bring him back with you,” said Priscilla, rosy to the nape of her neck.

“That isn’t the sort of rest my brain needs. It needs sympathy and encouragement and the influx of new thought. And the person who gave me all these, you, for some unaccountable reason, are the means of keeping away from me! You had better take your boy and do it yourself!” said Geoffrey, wheeling off in high dudgeon.

That was some days since. This evening Geoffrey was in the drawing-room playing a little prelude of Chopin’s that was nothing but a memory,

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a sob, and a sigh. Priscilla, coming into the room, went up behind him as he sat, extending her hands over his, effacing his, and played the gay measure of a minuet, that presently changed to a march, the wedding march of *Lohengrin*. "Elsa did not know the god in her husband, though," she said. "Do you hear it?" she cried. "It is the tread of glad feet! It is my happiness on the way to me."

"I wish it were mine," said Geoffrey.

"Oh, it is that, too, I hope," said Priscilla.

She had written a letter that day, a very brief letter. "My dear husband," it ran, "will you come to your boy and your wife, Priscilla?"

But when that first impetuous rush of feeling, that first impulse and action,

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had subsided, a great doubt took possession of Priscilla. She grew pale suffering it. She had kept him away so long. What if he did not choose to come? What if he had no more concern for the woman who had allowed him to deceive himself, who in truth had deceived him herself in letting him marry her while she yet reeled under the blow that had stunned her and struck dead, as she had thought then, her power for love or passion, who had made herself an incubus on his life, had driven him from his home, held him bound with a chain that by this time he might be wanting to break? She wished she could go to sleep till the week was over that it would take that letter to reach her husband, that it would take a reply from him to come to her. Even the boy in those



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hard days seemed to realize that something out of the common was in the air, was on the way, that something ailed his mother; he would look at her face bewildered, and, putting up a grieved lip, reach his little hands to smooth her cheek, or nestle against it with the baby kisses of his little wet mouth.

“Priscilla,” said Geoffrey, “you are more restless than the wind! You seem to have divined the secret of perpetual motion. Either you must get yourself quiet, or I must go somewhere else with my work.” It was evident, now, as always, that Mr. Geoffrey felt not at all that he was there because of Priscilla, but that Priscilla was there because of him. And if here any one had reminded Geoffrey of the pauper’s threat of running away from the almshouse if affairs

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were not better conducted there, he would have failed to see any relevance in the remark. Nor would Priscilla have seen it—until to-day. It was for Geoffrey's sake that she had come here—to put the means at his command that he needed; if also to repay to Mr. Pastner the debt they had incurred for the saving of Geoffrey's life and of his model; and so again for Geoffrey's sake. But to-day, even over her love of the forlorn and hapless brother, pulsed something stronger. She was here because she was the child's mother! Her head was high and her color was rich; she was here because she was George Pastner's wife! And then the color fell—a poor mockery of a wife, to whom perhaps her husband might never return!

The balmy air of the mild day was perfect; if it blew over Syrian gardens

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and thickets of roses it would have been no blander, no sweeter; the heaven wore its deepest blue, the sunshine sparkled over every leaf and spray and lay on a world of apple-bloom below the parapet, and made lanes of gold down azure-green and purple hollows of the hills. Priscilla, carrying her baby, a scarf of blue gauze wrapped round them both, moving down between the hedges, was only an impersonation of all the flowers and beauty and splendor of the morning. She left the garden, and descended the path between the young birches just trembling with tender green; a blue-bird dropped a warble of joy over her; the brook ran like a far sweet song below.

The stage had just gone toiling along the highway at the foot of the

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hill. She fancied it had stopped a minute or two, she could not say.

She went on more quickly down the hill, her heart beating all over her it seemed. Suddenly at a new sound, a crackle of a bush, a footstep coming nearer, a tread that had the beat of the music of the wedding march in her ear, she stood aside behind the screen of birch and vine, the baby reaching for the boughs in the sunshine with a glad babble that her kisses did not hush. The traveler came up and might have passed; her quick breath made it impossible to move again. And then she summoned her strength and separated the tangle, stepped out upon the path, confronting him in silence, with the child upon her arm, beautiful as some young madonna, with her bloom, her sweetness, her great solemn eyes.

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For a moment Pastner stopped, his hat in his hand. The vision was too radiant; it seemed to him a dream. Meeting those eyes, he hardly dared breathe, dared hope.

"Papa! papa!" cried the child, joyously, lifting his little arms as he was wont toward the portrait in the house. And then he had clasped wife and son in his embrace.

"Oh," whispered Priscilla, "is it true? Do you love me still?"

"Forever!" he exclaimed. "And you? Oh, Priscilla!"

"I think," said Priscilla, looking down, and then her whole soul pouring in a blaze from her blue eyes to his, "that I have never loved any one else."

And the three went on together to their home.



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